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LONDON FOR MILLER, PARIS FOR NOBLES

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [EFIN](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: WHEN YOUR FATHER GETS FIRED BY PRESIDENT ASAD

REF: A. DAMASCUS 37
[1](#)B. DAMASCUS 68
[1](#)C. DAMASCUS 72

Classified By: CDA Charles Hunter for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Suleman al-Raddawi, the 24-year-old son of former State Planning Commission (SPC) head Tayseer al-Raddawi, told us on January 26 his father is "doing fine" following his very public ouster from the SPC earlier this month. Complaining that Damascus' chattering classes had focused on his family in the wake of press reports that the president and prime minister had been annoyed by Raddawi's public criticism of the current five-year plan and its author, the University of Damascus medical student still wants to serve Syria "and improve the situation here" but also, like many of his peers, wants to get out of his obligatory military service. END SUMMARY.

"DAMASCUS CAN BE TOO SMALL"

[1](#)2. (C) President Asad fired former SPC Head Tayseer Raddawi on January 11 (ref A) and replaced him on a temporary basis with Raddawi's arch-rival, Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Dardari. On January 18, Asad appointed Amer Hosni Lutfi as SPC head; local media reported that Lutfi was expected to be less critical of Dardari because the two men shared a market-based economic philosophy (ref B). Commentators have interpreted Raddawi's ouster as a very public rebuke of a senior official for going too far in criticizing the SARG's senior leadership.

[1](#)3. (C) Alluding to the attention that has been focused on his father in recent weeks, the younger Raddawi complained about Damascus gossip. "This city can be too small sometimes. Sometimes you just want to go somewhere where no one will recognize you," he said. Despite all this, Suleman said his close-knit, supportive family is doing well. As if on cue, Suleman's mother called during his conversation with Emboff from a car dealership to ask his opinion on what color the new family car should be.

[1](#)4. (C) While he and his two brothers (who also have a three-year-old sister) have all gone into the medical field, Suleman said he remained intent on finding a way to serve his country. Echoing his father's economic views, he criticized free-market capitalism for "creating too many choices" and social inequities. "I think if people have too many choices, there is too much pressure in their lives and then they aren't happy," he declared.

[1](#)5. (C) Suleman related that he hoped to go to the U.S. for his residency upon graduation from medical school. "There are a lot of things about America that I admire, like the way they teach students." Suleman said he hoped to take what he learns in the U.S. and bring those ideas back to Syria "to help improve the situation here." He mused that perhaps he would try to become Dean of Damascus University's Medical School in order to benefit his alma mater. "Right now these

are all just dreams," he concluded.

16. (C) At the moment, Suleman has a more pressing concern. Like many young Syrian men approaching graduation, he is facing conscription into the army to complete his mandatory 21-month military service (ref C). Suleman reported that he was attempting to time his application to U.S. residency programs so that he could leave Syria immediately upon graduation from medical school and receive another deferment of his service.

HUNTER